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VANTAGE
PRESS RELEASE REVIEW
Inside information for comic dealers and collectors!
#4

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Our new Vantage columnist who writes without regrets in a biting and sarcastic manner. Not a bad job, eh?

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Well, you like perforated foil seals much better. We like 'em too.

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Special thanks to our advisors!

Vantage: Press Release Review, Volume One, Number 4, July 1994.

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Cover: Spider-Man TM & © 1994 Marvel Entertainment Group

HEY MAN, YOU RUN A COMIC STORE?

Hey, this first half is gonna be for store owners and store managers, so if you're not one, feel free to skip downward. However, if you're nosy, then you'll probably take pleasure in reading about somebody else's business. There. That sentence should pretty much guarantee you'll all be curious enough to read on for sure.

Anyway, I'd like to make comic shop people aware of the many ways **Vantage** can help you. First off, we've designed the cover to sell the book more strongly than ever. It was quality alone that allowed us to sell a two-sheet paper booklet for $1.50 in the old days. Today, the quality is even better, AND we've got the window dressing to t'um holes in your rack. If you've previously sold **Vantage** only to file customers, or if you haven't tried us lately, give us a shot on the rack!

Second, we have a variety of retailer support programs, including our advisor program, where we reward you handsomely for your thoughts. Send us a business card if you're interested. Also, we have a co-op program, and we can provide you with logos and artwork for in-store flyers and ads. Let me know personally what you need.

In short, **Vantage** is graduating from little company-hood, starting many of the programs that other publishers have available. But we're doing it **Vantage-style**, of course. It's thanks to store owners and managers like you that **Vantage** is growing by leaps and bounds today.

As for this issue, I am blown away by our two top picks. I tell you, this could be the issue of the year. If you want these books, especially ASM #149-150, snatch them up now. As always, thanks for all of your support.

Happy hunting!

—Rob Golub

Top Picks of the Month

Amazing Spider-Man #149-150 (Marvel Silver Age back-issues)
Showcase '94 #8-9 (DC/Zero Hour recent back-issues)

More Vantage Picks

Amazing Spider-Man, current issues (Marvel/Clone Story)
Crisis on Infinite Earths #1-12 (DC back-issues)
Doom's IV #1-up (Image)
Geomancer #1 (Valiant)
Hellshock #1-up (Image)
The Invisibles #1-up (DC/Vertigo)
Schism #1-up (Defiant)
Spectacular Spider-Man #216 (Marvel/Clone Story)
Spectacular Spider-Man, current issues (Marvel/Clone Story)
Spider-Man, current issues (Marvel/Clone Story)
Supreme #12-18 (Image/Extreme)
Web of Spider-Man, current issues (Marvel/Clone Story)
Wetworks #1-up (Image)
Zero Hour: Crisis In Time #4-0 (DC/Zero Hour)

VANTAGE PICK

Watch for the Vantage Star indicating our top picks!

"The above pick list is a guide based on research, advisors' opinions, and staff opinions — keep in mind that even the experts will disagree. Comics can lose value after months or years. You would be wise to trade or sell books before they lose value. Read over the facts and opinions in Vantage, examine the pick list, and then make your own decisions. Remember: 1) There's no sure thing. Never bet the farm on any one book. 2) It may be fun to hunt for winners, but comics are even more fun to read! Open up one of those sealed polybags and give comics a try!"

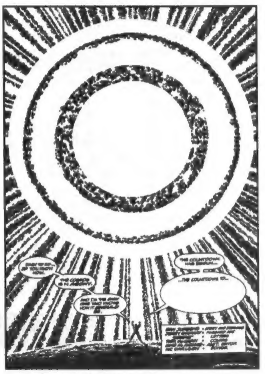
- Publisher Rob Golub

NEW ZERO HOUR PICKS!

As **Vantage** predicted SIX MONTHS AGO, **Valor** back-issues are starting to heat up around the nation. Now, while all of those non-**Vantage** readers run around paying premiums for books that you picked up at cover, we're proud to bring you the next Zero Hour books that everyone else will likely be looking for.

What are we talking about? Friends, we're talking about two killer Top Picks of the Month, **Showcase '94** #8 and #9.

Showcase '94 #8 features an under-publicized prelude to Zero Hour. Here's what everyone and their mother has already been told by DC: Waverider plummets through the time stream searching for missing Zero Hour bad guy Monarch.



TM & © 1994 DC Comics, Inc.

DC adds that **Showcase '94** #9 concludes the story, with Monarch attempting to adjust the time stream for his own nefarious ends. According to DC, "shocking secrets" are revealed, and Monarch emerges more powerful than ever, with a new costume. The story is written by Zero Hour heavy Dan Jurgens.

"Issue #8 should be on the racks as you read this and #9 is due out now."

Th-th-th-th-that's all folks — NOT!

Remember, Dan Jurgens is the key architect behind Zero Hour. **Vantage** has learned from key sources that **Showcase '94** #8 and #9 will feature a new villain, Extant, who will play a CENTRAL ROLE in the Zero Hour Saga. In fact, our sources indicate that **Extant will be THE villain to beat in the Zero Hour crossover.**

The best part: Our sources have confirmed that **Showcase '94** #8-9 contain **the origin of Extant.** Clearly, with Extant's important role in Zero Hour, and with the hype behind Zero Hour this summer, **Showcase '94** #8-9 show great potential.

Advance-orderers had no idea these books would be important, leading to low estimated print runs of about 60,000 each. Issue #8 should be on the racks as you read this and #9 is due our now.

Unconfirmed as we go to press: Our sources further indicate that Monarch, in fact, becomes Extant in issue #9. That is, the "shocking secrets revealed" and additional power granted to Monarch may be DC's roundabout way of telling us that Monarch actually *becomes* Extant. Monarch's first appearance is **Armageddon 2001** #1, a DC back issue. Before that, Monarch was the Hawk. Before that, he was Ernie on Sesame Street. Okay, he wasn't Ernie, but gee, this guy sure does change a lot.

Crisis On Infinite Earths

Vantage's information that **Crisis** will play a key role in Zero Hour has been further confirmed. **Vantage** has learned that as far as DC is concerned **Crisis** never ended, and that Zero Hour is essentially part two. In the old **Crisis on Infinite Earths** miniseries, multiple universes were falling apart all at once — the problems were only partly solved at the time, and anomalies have been creeping into our universe since then.

Now, those anomalies have reached a boiling point — a Zero Hour — and Zero Hour completists will have no choice but to go back to those old **Crisis** issues. Yummy in the tummy: **Crisis On Infinite Earths** #1-12, available in most back-issue bins.

HAS SPIDER-MAN BEEN JUST A CLONE FOR 19 YEARS?

The Spider-Man mythos is about to undergo one of its biggest changes since we were introduced to Peter Parker in **Amazing Fantasy** #15 thirty-three years ago. **Vantage** has obtained detailed exclusive information on this major event.

We kid you not. This is so cool, and **Vantage** is so excited, we can hardly type.

Our story starts nineteen years ago, in **Amazing Spider-Man** #149. Good ol' Spidey is captured by the Jackal and learns that he has been cloned. The rival forces Spider-Man and his clone to battle each other. An explosion defeats the Jackal and appears to kill the clone.

In **Amazing Spider-Man** #150, the remaining Spider-Man is unsure of whether he's the genuine article or a clone with engineered memories. Poor Peter is tormented throughout this issue, but he finally comes to the realization that he must be the real thing.

Today, as we approach **Amazing Spider-Man** #400, Marvel is returning to this plot line. The mysterious stranger traveling cross country in recent issues of the Spider-books is the Peter Parker clone.

In the wake of the real Peter's over-the-edge behavior and Aunt May's stroke, the clone arrives with his own special agenda. According to Marvel, the clone arrives "to set things right."

Peter's life is already a mess — he's still reeling from wounding a civilian in **Spectacular Spider-Man**. Also, Shriek and Carrion return to add to the chaos, and something's wrong with MJ. In **Amazing Spider-Man** #394, during a crossover with all of the other Spider-books, a new enemy will be introduced that's "destined to become the greatest threat Spider-Man has ever faced," says a Marvel statement. Still, with all that Spider-Man already has on his shoulders, he will be forced to deal with the return of his clone from **Amazing Spider-Man** #149!

"Marvel will present us with a startling question: Which Spider-Man is real?"

Important: Beginning in #395, **Web** and **Spider-Man** will focus on the adventures of the clone, while **Amazing** and **Spectacular** will focus on Spider-Man. This shows Marvel's major commitment to this project — to actually hand over two Spider-titles to the clone, even if on a temporary basis!

Spider-Man TM & © 1994 Marvel Entertainment group

With all of the focus that this storyline will bring to bear on the Peter Parker clone, it makes sense that the back-issue market will

SPIDER-MAN A CLONE?: (continued)

turn its attention to key books: **Amazing Spider-Man** #149 (1st clone appearance), **Amazing Spider-Man** #150 (end of clone story), and **Spectacular Spider-Man** #216 (inside sources indicate that Spidey and clone meet in this issue). Note that the meeting of the two in **Spectacular Spider-Man** #216, due out this month, **is completely unannounced — advance-orderers had no idea that this would be a special issue!**

However, it is Vantage's additional information (not yet formally announced by Marvel) that really blows the roof off of this thing! That is, Marvel will present us with a startling question: Which Spider-Man is real?

That's right, the Spider-Man we've all come to know and love for the past twenty years could be the clone appearing in issue #149! Which also means that the mysterious figure stalking the pages of the current Spider-books could be the real Spider-Man, the guy who got bit decades ago in **Amazing Fantasy** #15! **Marvel will torture us with these possibilities for many months, until a giant climax is reached in Amazing Spider-Man #400!**

The question of which is the real one will make **Amazing Spider-Man** #149 the possible first appearance of Spider-Man as we know him today. Since Spider-Man is the incredibly popular icon that he is, **even a mere question of this nature should explode interest in Amazing Spider-Man** #149. Also note that people who pick up #149 will have to hunt for #150 to complete the story (not to mention #144-147, which contain the rest of the Jackal story line), and that recent reappearances of the clone (or non-clone as the case may be) could also become covered!

We don't know all the details, but what we already know for sure is that Spider-Man's origin will now be in doubt for the first time. This leads us to strongly recommend **Amazing Spider-Man** #149-150. Each is available in most back-issue bins for five to fifteen dollars, depending on condition.

If you want to have any hope of reading these books affordably pick them up now. Also, keep a close eye on current Spider-books, now leading in to this historic story-line. This could turn out to be THE future pick opportunity of 1994!

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VANTAGE

COMING SOON!

VANTAGE PRESS RELEASE REVIEW

Inside information for comic dealers and collectors!

#6

INSIDE THE MIND OF ROB LIEFELD

ANALYSIS: WILL MARVEL REALLY DO IT?

The upcoming Return of the Clone story will be a fantastic event that will change the Spider-Man mythology forever. **In fact, Vantage would not be at all surprised if the supposed "clone" turned out to be the real Spider-Man.**

Picture in your mind ... the McDonald's sign. You know how it sometimes says, "Over 99 Billion Served," right? You get the feeling that the number would probably be higher if there were space for three digits. It might say, "Over 175 Billion Served," but due to the way the sign was constructed we're stuck with the outdated 99 billion.

Think of the Marvel Universe as a giant McDonald's sign. The Marvel Story, starting with **Fantastic Four** #1 in 1961 is now thirty-three years old, and Marvel's writers have backed themselves into a corner. How creative can a storyteller be if he is constrained by over three decades of history?

Take Spider-Man as an example. Spider-Man was originally a wide-eyed kid with good intentions who was often in over his head, but was truly lovable. Today, Spider-Man has saved the world, been to other planets, and met foes of great power about a zillion times. He cannot realistically be portrayed as that innocent kid anymore. Spider-Man has seen it all, and to top it off, he's married, graduated, and holds a real job. How boring.

What's next? Three kids, a house on Long Island, and a white picket fence? Ugh — even less appealing. The solution? Bring the old Spider-Man back, a Spider-Man without the experiences of the past nineteen years.

That's why **Vantage** believes there's an good chance that the supposed "clone" is here to stay, perhaps even as the true Spider-Man.

Think about it ... Spider-Man is going to be featured this fall in a new animated series on FOX. Sure, there'll be a **Spider-Man Adventures** comic modeled after the show. But when new readers grow weary of **Spider-Man Adventures**, who would they rather turn to? A Spider-Man with a tiresome thirty-three year history behind him, or a fresh, new Spider-Man?

If Marvel is smart, they'll take the plunge and make a Spider-switch, or at least give us a long-term choice between the two.

Top Ten Places The Clone Has Been For The Past Nineteen Years

10) The neutral zone.
9) Watching from a distance, waiting for the right moment.
8) Just too stupid to show up.
7) In a Singapore prison for leaving web all over the city.
6) Hanging out with the Gwen clone in California.
5) In cryogenic suspension, of course.
4) Wandering around the country, with amnesia.
3) Wandering around the country, feeling sorry for himself.
2) Wandering around the country, looking for **Valor** back-issues.

And the number one place the clone has been for the past nineteen years ...

1) In **Amazing Spider-Man** #149-up.

MARVEL'S MUTANT CROSSOVER

For the first time in several months, Marvel has scheduled a major crossover for their popular mutant titles. **Vantage** sees great potential in these books, because people may under-order. They will be distracted by DC's Zero Hour and by Marvel's decision to pull out of the advance-order catalogs.

The crossover is called the Phalanx Covenant. The word Phalanx usually means a massed group joined together for a military or other joint forceful purpose. In this context, the Phalanx is an artificial life force derived from the life-stuff of the **The New Mutant's** Warlock. The Phalanx, big surprise here, seeks to destroy all of mutantdom.

In a confusing Claremont-style plot-twist, the Phalanx can assume the form of even the X-Men's most trusted friends, or even the X-Men themselves. The X-Men are kidnapped, and Banshee and Jubilee are left with only two allies — Sabretooth and The White Queen.

The Phalanx Covenant Crossover is a huge mega-event that is made up of three parts. The first part is called Generation Next, running through **Uncanny X-Men** #316-317 and **X-Men** #36-37. **X-Men** back issues almost always do well, and with these being introductions to the crossover, they should be no exception.

The Phalanx Covenant crossover continues with Life Signs, the second installment of this three-part event. In the Life Signs story, X-Force, Excalibur, and X-Factor are forced into hiding by the Phalanx. The events in this crossover will explain why Banshee will be the new teacher of the upcoming Generation X team, rather than good ol' Charlie.

In Life Signs, the Phalanx threat sets the stage for the formation of Generation X, Marvel's newest X-Men series slated to begin this fall. Life Signs runs through **X-Force** #38, **X-Factor** #106, and **Excalibur** #82.

The third mini-crossover in this mega-crossover is called "Final Sanction." In the **Wolverine** and **Cable** titles, only some of the X-Men survive the Phalanx's assault. Yes, only Wolverine, Cable, Cyclops, and Jean are left, and it's up to them to rescue the X-Men!

Wolverine #85 and **Cable** #16 make up Final Sanction, the conclusion to the Phalanx Covenant. **Vantage** has high hopes for the Phalanx Covenant — those advance-orderers who are distracted by bigger promotions, and are forgetful of the popularity of the X-titles, could order low on these.

Keep an eye on the Phalanx Covenant.

Jubilee Artwork TM & © 1994 Marvel Entertainment Group

GENERATION X WILL BE A NEW X-BOOK

Generation X is the newest X-Men team, formed in the wake of the Phalanx Covenant. Team members will include Husk, Synch, Skin, Banshee, and Jubilee. Issue #1 introduces two more additions to the team: Chamber and Gateway. Issues #2-4 include the introduction of new team member, Mondo, and the return of a villain from the X-Men's past. Banshee and The White Queen will be the leaders and trainers of these new young heroes.

Vantage sees great potential in a new mutant super-team. Just as Spider-Man needs a new freshness, so do America's mutants. Jim Lee introduced a new young X-style super-team, **Gen-13,** and look how it exploded.

This is not your father's **Uncanny X-Men. Generation X** has nice potential. Just as the X-Force was introduced in **The New Mutants,** look for **Generation X** (or parts of it) to be introduced in upcoming mutant titles.

SHI #1 IS A GIANT HIT:

BILL TUCCI THANKS HIS LUCKY STARS!

Vantage took a huge risk putting a new young artist's work on our cover. People said to us, "You guys are crazy ... nobody ever heard of this Tucci person."

Well, we need shake in our little booties no longer. Bill Tucci's fantastic artwork and writing has propelled **Shi** #1 (Tucci pronounces it "she") forward at warp nine.

Shi #1 sold out of 50,000 copies instantly a couple months back, and as we go to press, sources indicate **Shi** #1 is scheduled to appear on some of the more influential top ten lists in the nation.

Now one of the hottest books in the country, **Shi** #1 is only the beginning. In an interview with **Vantage**, Tucci proudly proclaimed, "**Shi** #2 will be out in June. It's all pencilled and part inked. Issue #3 is being plotted and scripted in August."

Shi is a six-issue miniseries, after which **Shi** may "disappear for a little while," though there may be a **Shi Gallery** issue first.

Tucci insists that "**Vantage's** write-up was crucial to the success of **Shi**." He likes to tell the story of one time when he stopped at a comic street vendor in New York and saw **Shi** #1 on the table. Tucci asked, "Is that book hot?" The vendor said yes and Tucci asked, "How do you know?" The vendor reached under the table and pulled out a copy of **Vantage: Press Release Review #1**.

"The vendor reached under the table and pulled out a copy of Vantage: Press Release Review #1."

Shi #3 Cover Artwork TM & © 1994 Bill Tucci

For all of the pride this brings us, **Vantage** feels compelled to point out that it was not our intention to affect the marketplace. Still, it is pretty cool, eh?

Vantage asked Tucci why, besides great story, art, and support from **Vantage**, his book did so well. He replied, "Books like **Razor**, **Lady Death**, and **Vampirella** led the way. People didn't want to miss out on another one."

On **Shi's** success Tucci adds, "I'm blown away by it! I just took out a minimal amount of advertising! Every morning I wake up and I thank my lucky stars! I knew it was gonna sell, but not like this."

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VANTAGE PRESS RELEASE REVIEW
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☆OFFICIAL☆ PRESS RELEASE

Reprinted below is an official press release exactly as it was mailed to Vantage. Since press releases come straight from comic publishers, they can be the most accurate, most up-to-date source of news possible. They can also be biased.

CRUSADE ENTERTAINMENT LTD.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SHI HITS THE FANS

New independent explodes onto the scene

Critics and fans alike have rewarded Crusade Entertainment Ltd., Crusade's first publication, SHI, "The Way of the Warrior" #1 has sold out of its 50,000 copy print run "The response [to SHI] has been overwhelming ..tremendous! says Crusade's CEO William Tucci. The creator and artist continued, "We had initial orders for 37,000 and in within 3 days, they were all gone!"

SHI, "The Way of the Warrior" is the bi-monthly miniseries everyone is talking about Its six issue story arc covers the introduction of SHI, an Amerasian renegade from a society of shadow warriors who leaves her native Japan for NYC in search of the Yakuza hitman who murdered her father and brother twenty years prior Torn between her thirst for revenge and her yearnings for enlightenment, SHI follows the murderer, now a successful real estate mogul into the depths of the New York underworld and to the heights of the same society's "cultural elites" In the process, SHI sets in motion a steamroller of corruption and retribution that is impossible to stop

Crusade will kick off the "SHI Hits The Fans Tour 94'" at the Space Travelers Convention June 3-5, Patrick Henry Mall, Virginia Beach VA Upcoming shows include the Heroes Convention, June 17-19 Charlotte NC, the Chicago Comicon, July 1-3 and the San Diego Comicon August 4-7 These and other dates yet to be announced will include the "SHI Team," books, T-shirts and even the appearance of SHI herself!

SHI, "The Way of the Warrior" part 2 ships in June 1994, in 36 pages of riproaring full color -- don't miss it!

VANTAGE Voicebox

The Next *Shi*?

Yes, these independents are hot. First there was Lady Death, then Shi, and now... Astar? Little-known characters from independent companies now have a reputation for exploding in the marketplace, and Vantage has our eye on a brand - Astar #1 from Entity Comics.

The first issue won't be out until October, but it's scheduled to ship with a Jae Lee cover, introducing incredible interior pencils from newcomer Oliver Isabedra. Oliver is a 22 year old prodigious major with no formal art training, but as always one wild comic page. Astar's a cool looking space-dude. Keep an eye on this one.

For more on Shi, check out our article in the Market Guide.

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VANTAGE QUICKIES

The Invisibles Logo TM & © 1994 Grant Morrison

Grant Morrison Returns

Here's a book that comes close to achieving Top Pick of the Month status. Grant Morrison's new **The Invisibles** #1 kicks off this month as an ongoing title.

"Wrap all of these up into one and you've got a nice market-busting combo that none of Morrison's past work could lay claim to."

It was only a few years back that Grant Morrison's **Animal Man** exploded in the marketplace, the first issue soaring up to $20. Ever since Morrison left, some complain that **Animal Man** just isn't the same.

Morrison's run on **Doom Patrol** and **Swamp Thing** also attracted considerable attention.

Still, **The Invisibles** #1 has got a fresh combination of factors (pointing towards big success) that go beyond what Morrison's past work had behind it: **The Invisibles** #1 is (1) a number one issue, (2) the introduction of new characters and new concepts, (3) the kick off for a continuous series, (4) owned by Grant Morrison (and thus possibly his best work ever), and (5) being introduced in this post-glut time of low orders. Wrap all of these up into one and you've got a nice market-busting combo that none of Morrison's past work could lay claim to.

A nice pick. On sale soon.

Schism This Summer

This summer, Defiant's **Schism** #1-up bring the Defiant universe's problems to a head. A Schism has separated Dreamtime from reality (as **Vantage** predicted back in our old format), while War Dancer and Charlemagne duel. Then, in **Schism** #2, the Good Guys work alongside the Warriors of Plasm.

At this time, print runs on Defiant books are low — if Schism catches on, back-issues could pick up.

Image Comics

Two other Image first issues due out this month have nice potential. Remember that stores are ordering low lately, making these number ones far more attractive than Image number ones from just a few months ago.

Doom IV Logo and Art TM & © 1994 Rob Liefeld

First on our hit list is the much-hyped **Doom's IV** from Liefeld. This one has already been optioned for a "major motion picture" by Stephen Spielberg's Amblin Entertainment, so this one could be a sleeper hit. The first appearance of this new project is, yes, in upcoming **Doom's IV** #1. Of course, with Liefeld's exciting new art-style, it could also be a plain old instant hit. Also, **Vantage** is impressed with the artwork we've seen for Joe Lee's **Hellshock** #1.

VANTAGE QUICKIES

Holocaust and X-Men

Look for Holocaust, the villain first introduced in Stryke File, to arrive on the scene. Holocaust will set off a chain of events that will seem unrelated until the fatal blow in December, when the X-Men are scheduled for really big trouble.

Zero Hour: Crisis In Time

Vantage has seen a preview of the art to the first issue (which is #4, counting down to #3, 2, 1, and 0), and it is quite impressive. The storyline is impressive as well and we look forward to reading the mini in its entirety.

Will Zero Hour be ordered like it's water in a desert? Oh yeah.

Still, the cover prices on these books are a low $1.50. They won't need too much demand to go up, and retailers won't be ordering too heavily, for they are still recovering from the woes of this past summer.

These books do have some potential in the market — they could surprise us.

Concrete: Killer Smile

Some of the best reading in comics is available only in the form of occasional minis. Concrete is the story of a regular guy trapped in a concrete body. It is sensitive and thought-provoking, and reminiscent of the famous Thing story in Fantastic Four #51.

If you value your brain, feed it **Concrete: Killer Smile** #1-4. The first issue is due out this month. Also, check out the companion story in **Dark Horse Presents** #87, due out at the same time as #1. Readers of the mini may go searching for this under-publicized Killer Smile companion story, causing #87 to heat up.

"In a bold move, Image shipped Supreme #12 with a surprise Steven Platt cover last month."

Surprise Platt Covers

In a bold move, Image shipped **Supreme** #12 with a surprise Steven Platt cover last month. The book disappeared off of most shelves quickly.

Once again, Extreme Studios demonstrates their understanding of the marketplace — having done this without first informing advance-orderers, thus adding to the excitement.

Our Extreme Studios sources tell us that Platt is also scheduled to do the covers for **Supreme** #13-18. Note that Supreme is going biweekly this Summer, so these Platt covers are coming your way fast.

Estimated print run of #12 and #13: well under 100,000 each.

Lady Death Causes Chaos

Retailers who ordered twenty-five copies or more of the Lady Death swimsuit issue are in for a surprise. They'll be getting a surprise Special Edition along with their regular order.

The Special Edition will be the same as the regular except it will have a red velvet cover. Yes, we said red velvet. Weird, but cool.

Lady Death, from Chaos! Comics, has become a hit in recent months for one very good reason. The artwork is awesome.

Chaos! Comics now introduces a series called **Lynch Mob**, super-hero fare with a more mature twist. Keep an eye on **Lynch Mob**, and on this young, fast-moving company.

VANTAGE QUICKIES

Wetworks is Recommended

Wetworks #1, as we told you last issue, is due out this month and should be shipping on time. This will be a miniseries from Whilce Portacio featuring a covert team sent to quell an East European civil war that stumbles onto something unexpected.

Whilce's artwork is unique — it's not another Liefeld or McFarlane rip off — and it's top-notch jaw-dropping. Look for heavy interest in **Wetworks**, and look for cautious ordering from retailers who don't want to get burned again by allocating cash to Image books that never come out.

Recommended and due out this month.

Two More

Two more items: Recent **Wolverine** books, after the big events in **Wolverine** #75 and **X-Men** #25, are running high in reader interest. Look for increased market reaction.

"Recent Wolverine books, after the big events in Wolverine #75 and X-Men #25, are running high in reader interest."

Geomancer #1 comes with a hefty $3.75 price tag, but an awesome chromium cover. Looks good.

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STAMP #1
BOOK 4

THE VANTAGE ZERO HOUR CHECKLIST

DC Comics has a variety of obscure titles leading into Zero Hour. Many of these books have been severely under-printed. Please send corrections, deletions, or additions to **Vantage Viewpoints.**

August 1993:

- ❑ **Valor** #12. Part one of D.O.A. storyline. Valor meets and "saves" Lori. Valor finds out he's dying.

September 1993:

- ❑ **Valor** #13. Part two. Valor's record disappears from Legionnaire computer — the first DC time anomoly?

October 1993:

- ❑ **Valor** #14. Part three. Valor reappears in the Legionnaire's computer as an obscure hero who died of lead poisoning in 1994. This creates a paradox. Without Valor's legacy the Legionnaires cannot exist. Valor and Lori get [illegible]

November 1993:

- ❑ **Valor** #15. Part four. Valor meets all new terrorism — he decides that if he's going to die, he must do as much good as possible before then.

December 1993:

- ❑ **Valor** #16. Part five. Lori (Glorith) turns out to have betrayed Valor!

January 1994:

- ❑ **Valor** #17. Part six (final part to D.O.A. story). A legionnaire disappears due to the contradictory time-stream. Valor dies, thanks to Glorith. Young Brainiac screams of her, "You've shortened the very laws of time! The consequences . . . they're unimaginable!" A different Valor then arrives, alive, through a time portal! This could turn out to be a very important issue.

February 1994:

- ❑ **Team Titans** #19. Past and future crash around the team.
- ❑ **Valor** #18. With the first Valor dead, the space-time continuum continues to unravel.

March 1994:

- ❑ **Hawkman** #9. DC tells **Vantage** that this issue ties into Zero Hour as, far from Earth, an ominous figure moves on a collision course for the Hawkworld Thanagar.
- ❑ **Legion of Superheroes** #57. Unsettling developments in the time-stream lead to "future" problems.
- ❑ **Team Titans** #20. Several Titans die in this issue, setting the stage for Zero Hour.
- ❑ **Valor** #19. Somebody must take Valor's place in history or the Legionnaires will cease to exist.

April 1994:

- ❑ **Darkstars** #21. The countdown to Zero Hour begins for the Darkstars as former Green Lantern John Stewart is approached by the Darkstars' masters, the Controllers, for a mysterious mission.
- ❑ **Hawkman** #10. Countdown to Zero Hour continues.
- ❑ **Legion of Superheroes** #58. More anomalies in the time stream lead to a surprising alliance.
- ❑ **Team Titans** #21. Hints of Zero Hour continue to unfold as the Team Titans are shortened by death and destruction.
- ❑ **Valor** #20. The "damned" Valor must repair the damaged timeline — the biggest mission of his life. If he fails the future could cease to exist!

May 1994:

- ❑ **Darkstars** #22. Countdown to Zero Hour continues for the Darkstars.
- ❑ **Flash** #92. The future-time fugitive Iris West-Allen makes a panicked flight to the 20th century.
- ❑ **Hawkman** #11. As part of Zero Hour, the Hawkgod speeds towards Earth [illegible] Hawkman!
- ❑ **Justice League** [illegible] #40. The Judgment Day cross-over ends. This issue leads into Zero Hour
- ❑ **Legionnaires** #16. Several heroes travel through time in this PRELUDE TO THE "END OF AN ERA" CROSS-OVER!
- ❑ **Legion of Superheroes** #59. Another PRELUDE TO THE "END OF AN ERA" CROSS-OVER!
- ❑ **Team Titans** #22. The countdown to Zero Hour continues as the U.S. Government sends the Titans to clean up a nuclear disaster.
- ❑ **Valor** #21. Valor is on a mission he must complete. Another PRELUDE TO THE "END OF AN ERA" CROSS-OVER!

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About *Shi* #1

Shi #1 has heated up around the nation thanks to great art and wonderful storytelling. To thank *Vantage* readers for their early support, Bill Tucci has agreed to sign a limited quantity of *Shi* #1's.

Touted as the next *Lady Death*, *Shi* #1 disappeared off the shelves a couple months ago and has been highly sought after ever since. For more on *Shi* check out our coverage in the Market Guide and check out Bill Tucci's press release, both in this issue.

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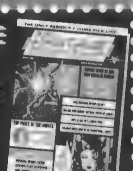

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VANTAGE Card Picks

Wolverine FlairPrint
Coca-Cola Collection
Series 3
Comic Images/Previews
Promo Card Set

Wolverine ™ & © 1994 Marvel Entertainment Group, Inc.

Portrait Cards at Pack Prices

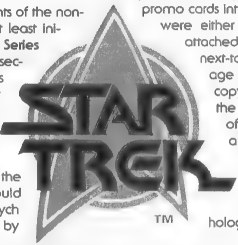
The first two Marvel card sets from Fleer (**X-Men** and **Spider-Man**) come with a bonus in each case: a set of oversized cards. Dealers were able to sell the card sets readily (no doubt due to the scarcity), and the demand has not gone unnoticed: Fleer will be producing FlairPrints of the Marvel Universe 6.5" by 10" cards to accompany their **Flair Marvel Universe** trading cards. The cards will be sold to dealers in boxes that contain four copies of each of ten different cards. Fleer suggests a retail price of $1.49 per FlairPrint and may expect the cards to be sold in complete sets of ten. However, **Vantage** expects a slightly different strategy to appear. While the **Spider-Man** oversized cards sold better as a set, the **X-Men** cards did well when sold one card at a time. This makes more sense when multiple characters are involved (the **Spider-Man** cards were essentially uncut sheets from the set), and that is precisely what is being handed to the dealers with the ten different cards.

This card will be heavily demanded by the legions of Wolvie fans who could care less about Storm, Ghost Rider, Magneto and the rest.

Most comic stores initially sell all new cards in a set at the same price. This will no doubt happen with these FlairPrints for at least a week or two when the cards first appear. Every Marvel card set ever released has exhibited a specific demand which is more focused in this ten card set than normal: one of the ten cards is Wolverine, pouncing out at you in his blue and gold suit. This card will be heavily demanded by the legions of **Wolvie** fans who could care less about **Storm**, Ghost Rider, Magneto and the rest. Collectors would be advised to quickly get the cards they want before the laws of supply and demand cause prices to escalate for the cards of the more popular characters.

Beam Them Down Again, Scotty

One of the successful events of the non-sports market last summer, at least initially, was the **Star Trek Master Series** I set. This summer brings the second installment in the series from SkyBox. The high-quality artwork of the 100-card set should again appeal to countless Trek fans, and the nine chase cards (a triptych [three-card mural] of each of the three Star Trek crews) should keep demand high. The triptych for the original series is done by Joe Jusko, The Next Generation by Boris, and Deep Space Nine by Julie Bell. **Vantage** notes that collectors will want to get all three triptychs to fill a nine-pocket card page. The wrappers also include an offer for a set of four mail-in holograms and a collector's album.



*Attention on **Star Trek** will be high this summer with **The Next Generation** wrapping up after seven seasons and with the upcoming movie featuring the Next Generation cast.*

The problem with the first series became evident after a few short weeks: dealers had ordered much too heavily, and the large number of unsold boxes rapidly dragged down the price of the cards. **Vantage** doesn't expect dealers to repeat their errors, and those who still have Series I boxes may underorder this time around. Attention on Star Trek will be high this summer with **The Next Generation** wrapping up after seven seasons and with the upcoming movie featuring the Next Generation cast. Collectors may want to get their chase sets completed quickly if the supply starts to dry up soon after the cards hit the market. SkyBox has indicated that the case run for Series II will be much lower than Series I.

Last Chance Promo Cards

One of the major comic distributors, Diamond Comic Distributors, puts out a catalog entitled Previews every month, announcing the new card sets as well as the various comics available for order. For years the non-sports card companies have been including promo cards into the catalog, but the cards were either part of a larger sheet or attached in a manner that made it next-to-impossible for the average collector to get a good copy out of the book. Twenty of the promo cards are being offered by Comic Images as a set in a special collector's box at a cost of under $10. This offer is made even more appealing by the addition of the Frankenstein hologram promo card for the FPG **Bernie Wrightson** card set — a hologram that was NOT in the card set, but was glued to the cover of Previews! A quick glance at several price guides shows that this one card alone is worth the price of admission.

This promo offer is limited to 7500 sets, and should be highly-sought after by the more fanatical completists. The set's low price and attractive cards make it one of **Vantage**'s favorite picks for the year. Note that this set is available exclusively from Diamond — collectors may want to put an early order in to a store that receives their merchandise from Diamond. **Vantage** also notes that the solicitation for this set is in the very front of Previews rather than in the trading card section. Many dealers will likely overlook this important set.

The Gallery Is Filling Up

Vantage has always enjoyed looking at artwork, and every month we seem to have more to look at; there are now at least three companies that seem determined to release new art card sets on a regular basis. As nice as these may be, unless a wider market is developed there isn't room for unlimited card sets of this type. This month, there are four more sets, each trying to stake out a slightly different piece of the pie.

Star Trek: Next Generation™ & © 1994 Paramount Pictures.
FPG logo ™ & © 1994 Frankenstein Publishing Group.

The set with the best chance of appreciation is the **Ken Kelly Collection Series 2 Fantasy Art Cards** from FPG. The 90-card set features some killer new artwork and copies of paintings done for Warren Magazine covers. What really gives this set its edge is the Conan artwork — there are still a lot of fans who love the barbarian, and Kelly does him as well as anybody. Chase cards include five "Metallic Storm" images and 1000 randomly inserted autograph cards.

Conan ™ 1984 Conan Properties, Inc. Artwork © 1984 Ken Kelly

Comic Images offers us **The Alien World Of Wayne Barlowe**, featuring artwork that has broken into mainstream books and magazines. Barlowe and his work will be familiar to a completely different audience than most of the SF-oriented cards, and if you can make contact with these humans (and convince them to collect cards!) you could have an easier sale with this set than the others. There will be several subsets, including prism cards, a medallion card, an autographed card, and more.

Forbidden Universe: Luis Royo 2 Cards, also from Comic Images, features cards which are aimed at a more adult market — sales should be similar to those from the first set, although the increased chase card scheme now used by Comic Images should help dealers who break down boxes to sell sets and chase cards.

Lee MacLeod is not a household name, but most of us would recognize his work when shown some of the movie posters he has done. Cardz is releasing the **Lee MacLeod: Sci-Fi/Fantasy Art Trading Card Collection** using the same kind of format that proved successful with their Julie Bell cards: every pack contains one of ten Tekchrome cards, and nine packs are sufficient to put together the regular 60 card set (if you are extremely lucky, ten packs would also provide a complete set of the Tekchromes). Randomly packed autograph cards will also be included.

And Now a Look At Real Demand

Collect-A-Card has a franchise that must be the envy of every other card company in the country: they are bringing out the third **Coca-Cola** set. The appeal of these cards to older collectors is, if anything, growing with time (just try putting together sets of the Santa Cards from the first two sets!) As if another ten gold foil Santa set wasn't enough (1 Santa card in 12 packs), this time around there is also a limited six-card Polar Bear subset (which should appeal to the younger collector). Perhaps it is possible to come out with too many of these card sets, but **Vantage** expects that the third set is still the Real Thing.

Collect-A-Card indicates that Series IV will

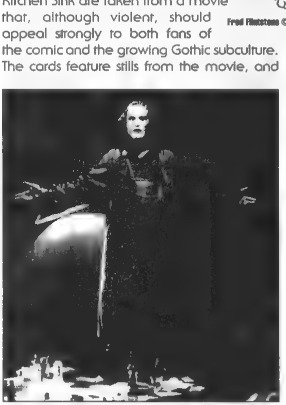
Artwork ™ & © 1984 Luis Royo

be the final **Coca-Cola** set, and will include a Norman Rockwell subset. This proves that the producers of these cards know their marketplace very, very well.

A Visit to the Movies

As usual, there are several movie-related card sets offered, and **Vantage** has had a chance to view the movies first!

The Crow Trading Cards from Kitchen Sink are taken from a movie that, although violent, should appeal strongly to both fans of the comic and the growing Gothic subculture. The cards feature stills from the movie, and



The Crow ™ & © 1994 James O'Barr

two chase sets (6 "Crow-mium" cards and 10 "Crowvision" scenes). If these cards were available the week the movie came out, they would sell out. If these cards were available the month the movie came out, they would sell out. For some reason, the cards will trail the movie by two months or more, and **Vantage** worries that by then other blockbuster films from the summer will have deflected attention from these cards. Of course, there's always video and cable.

Cardz is producing another set of **Flintstones** cards which use artwork from the original cartoon episodes. There are sixty cards in the basic set and three Tekchrome cards available for those who enjoy chase cards. This set will trail the release of the live-action movie by about a month, but the cards are not directly connected to the film. If a mania grows around the **Flintstones** (and a massive promotional push has been underway for months), these cards could ride the tide of public interest to a shore littered with sand dollars.

Fred Flintstone © 1994 Hanna-Barbera

Akira has been the most successful Japanimation film export to the U.S., and the first full card set devoted to it is being released by Cornerstone Communications. The set contains 100 cards, a small number considering that there are ten cards to a pack. Perhaps a bigger concern is the low count of chase cards: three chromium cards and one prism card. While the cards will be sought-after by Japanimation fans, the long-term potential for the cards might be limited by the sparse chase card set.

Finally, we get a set of cards based on **The Mask**. Cardz is producing a set that features artwork from both the comics and the movie, and if the film holds up as well as the trailer for the film, **Vantage** can see these cards disappearing quickly the same way that the **Nightmare Before Christmas** cards did. Final details on this set are not confirmed, but expect at least three Tekchrome chase cards. Cardz indicates that they are looking at other special effects for the cards to match the special effects in the movie.

The Mask ™ & © 1994 Dark Horse Comics

NON-SPORTS (continued)

Speculative Corner

POGS were all the rage in Hawaii — they came stateside, we yawned, they left.

Now it's time for a French import: phone cards. These cards feature artwork from various comics, are usually produced in limited quantities, and come with a magnetic strip that somehow allows you to make long distance phone calls (typically $10-$20 worth of calls or ten to twenty minutes of long distance time). Will they play in Peoria? Will used cards be truly collectible? A number of **X-men** phone cards featuring comic cover art are scheduled, gold holograms featuring Frazetta artwork are on their way, and even a **Monkeyman & O'Brien** card signed by Art Adams will be available.

Will any of these cards have any value after the phones reject them? **Vantage** is wary, but our first bet is on the **Hellshock** Phone card that is signed by Jae Lee — limited to 2500 numbered cards, and featuring the artwork from the cover of the eagerly anticipated **Hellshock** #1. **Vantage** expects these cards to have the highest collectibility.

One question: will the phone cards have to have all their phone time still unused to be considered in Mint condition?

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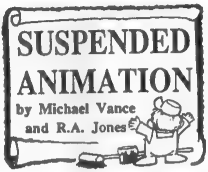

This is **Madman**, the stuff of dreams: disjointed events and conversations that seem slightly inappropriate for the situation, peace, horror, uninhibited desires, and garbled memories.

Madman is a non-super-powered, oddly-costumed hero, and the subject of two series from two different publishers.

Here is the menu for madness in the first issue of the reprint series: An eyeball eaten. A dead doctor in a food freezer. Violent murder and occasional foul language. Dishwashing. A yo-yo attack. Action, adventure, and insight into a twisted mind.

In the first issue of the new series the menu expands. More brief violence and no foul words. Romance. A flying saucer crashes. An alien lurches. Brain tests. Sewers and beatnicks. Intrigue and insanity!

Zealots of the bizarre will find **Madman** exciting. More cautious readers will meet this enigma with uneasy curiosity. Don't despair — read on. What at first may seem disjointed but interesting will become original, engrossing, and very well written. Michael Allred knows what he wants to say and how to say it.

Allred's art style is dynamic, clean, and distinctive. It tells his oddball story with a slightly-a-kilter line heavily influenced by commercial art and New Wave comics. Timing and scene changes are precise. There is a touch of satire in his images.

There's a method in his Madman. There's a madness in Allred's methods. It's a disturbing marriage that cannot be ignored. In a sense, this may be the best sort of comics that shake us awake from dreaming.

"There's a method in his Madman. There's a madness in Allred's methods."

Recommended.

Madman #1/$3.95, 48 Pages from Kitchen Sink Comix/Madman #1/$2.95, 32 pages from Dark Horse Comics/art and words: Michael D. Allred.

TOP READING PICK OF THE MONTH

Zen, Intergalactic Ninja

Zen may sound familiar to you. That's probably because it's a word. Zen is a Buddhist sect devoted to introspection.

But that's not all. **Zen** is also a comic book character who's anything but introspective. He's downright rambunctious.

A blue, yes blue, alien from outer space, **Zen** whips out his sword and battles those who would destroy Earth. It's down to Earth fun-fun-fun, reminiscent of those good ol' Marvel books we all grew up with. To top it off, **Zen** (first introduced by Archie Comics) is now published by Entity Comics, with a fresh new look.

Don Chin, publisher of Entity, is the writer of that first **Zen** story, and he's now made a major commitment to **Zen** with his own company. Entity is constantly publishing **Zen** books of the highest quality.

You might not expect it from a smaller publisher, but **Zen** art-work is typically better than most of what you'll see in larger publishers' books. Bill Maus draws a cool, blue alien who could just as easily be jumping out of an Image book.

Now that the character Zen is as familiar to you as the word Zen, we suggest you check him out. In comic shops everywhere.

Zen © 1994 Zen Comics Inc.

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Beasties #1 signed by Javier Saltares
Prudence and Caution #1 signed by Jim Shooter
Prudence and Caution #1 signed by Chris Claremont
Doctor Chaos #2 signed by the four Triumphant creators

Plus, a single grand prize winner will be chosen at random to win a limited ...

Extreme #0 signed by Rob Liefeld!

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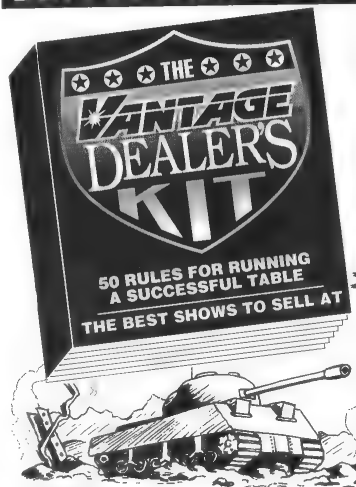

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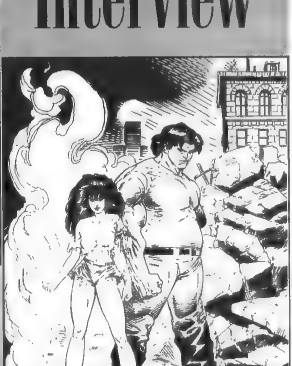
Sovereign Seven ™ & © 1994 Chris Claremont

Claremont Interview



Prudence and Caution ™ & © 1994 Rainbow Enterprises, Inc.

*Former **X-Men** master Chris Claremont sits down for a chat with **Vantage** to discuss his ongoing **Prudence and Caution** series for Defiant as well as other choice items.*

***Vantage:** What are your plans for **Prudence and Caution**?*

Claremont: Well, thematically, my goal is to make it like the old television series *The Avengers*. The problem is that Prudence in effect conquers worlds for a living. She's very good at it. Earth looks somewhat nice for her latest conquest. Caution likes her a lot, but he doesn't think this is an appropriate mode of behavior for a young lady. So he's going to try and stop her. Taking over a world doesn't necessarily mean raising a big army and taking over the place. There are lots of ways to do it. There are sneaky ways to do it and she's really sneaky. He doesn't know whether he's helping to achieve her goal or stop her.

***Vantage:** What do you mean by that?*

Claremont: Well, I haven't figured it out yet. (laughter) It's adventure with a laugh, like *The Avengers*. High adventure that doesn't take itself so ferociously seriously.

Vantage: *How closely will* **Prudence and Caution** *tie in with the Defiant universe?*

Claremont: I suppose, worse comes to worse, I'll be dragged kicking and screaming into their continuity (laughter). I assume it will be as fully integrated as any book in their line. I don't know a lot of what they're planning simply because I haven't been kept as up-to-date as I need to be, but that'll all work out with time.

"Taking over a world doesn't necessarily mean raising a big army and taking over the place. There are lots of ways to do it."

Vantage: *Do you think that with your busy schedule it's difficult for you to...*

Claremont: Well the problem with Defiant as with Image as with Malibu as with Dark Horse to an extent, and unlike Marvel or DC, is that you don't have thirty or forty years of history to draw from. So you take over **Spider-Man**, you've got a body of work to draw from. Prudence – they're making up the world while I'm making up the character. Jim may know who Glimmer is and what he does, but as a reader I only know what's in the books.

Vantage: *These characters were originally developed by Jim Shooter and/or his staff, right? Since you obviously have the opportunity to do your own stuff, why did you decide to do what someone else had created?*

Claremont: Because at the time, the idea of supporting a new company was very appealing. Jim and I started talking about this over a year ago. None of the stuff that I'm doing now was definite then. Not **Huntsman**, not **Renegade**, not **Sovereign 7**. A lot has changed since then. A lot has changed about the business, and my feelings have changed. But on the other hand I gave Jim a commitment, and I feel I should stand by that.

Vantage: *What do you mean when you say your feelings have changed?*

Claremont: My feelings about work-for-hire. About doing characters work-for-hire. I think the Defiant deal is as fair and equitable as any being offered today on a non-creator-owned basis. It's just that in my secret heart of hearts it's always – "the books that are mine will always have first place on the totem pole over the books that aren't."

Vantage: *I understand that Defiant has a policy that grants creators who have significant influence over the development of a character a royalty over time?*

Prudence and Caution ™ & © 1994 Enlightened Entertainment, Ltd.

Claremont: Yeah, well that's why Defiant's deal is as good as any and better than most. I think if there were no **Sovereign 7**, I'd have absolutely no problem with it. I don't think I have a problem now. There are only so many hours in the day and so many jobs that I can do. You start setting up projects two years in advance. You don't assume they're all going to come at the same time.

Vantage: *Some have said that* **Sovereign 7** *seems like an attempt to recapture some of the plot elements or theme elements of* **X-Men** *–*

Claremont: No...

Vantage: *...young people not part of the greater society.*

"...The books that are mine will always have first place on the totem pole over the books that aren't."

Claremont: Well, if I did a solo story about a character from another world with powers and abilities beyond normal men, everyone would say gee, that's sort of like Superman. In structural terms there are probably superficial resemblances. I'm sure there will be thematic resemblances in the types of stories because I'm much the same now as I was then. But they're different books, different characters, a different environment, and they'll evolve in a different direction.

Vantage: *You're penchant for running a variety of plot lines at the same time is well-known. Do you always have consistent resolution in mind?*

Claremont: Yeah. But the resolution that sees print is not always the resolution I started out with. Serial comics evolve over time.

Vantage: *Do you ever regret having left X-Men?*

Claremont: Do I regret leaving a situation where I owned nothing? Where I was totally at the mercy of editorial and commercial forces over which I had no control? Where I had minimal participation in the subsidiary merchandising and marketing of the characters? ... To a situation where I own the characters, to one where I have a far better deal in terms of both commercial and creative, to one where I own a preponderance of the licensing rights? Oh, yeah, I'd... the fact is, no. What I regret about the X-Men is the way I left. What I regret is the year of grief and anger leading up to that moment and the year or more that followed it. It's sort of like when I moved to Brooklyn. As soon as I got there I thought, why didn't I do this years ago? I love Marvel as a company. I love the X-Men as a concept. But the Marvel of today is not the Marvel I went to work for 25 years ago. The X-Men today are not the series that I had built up over 17 years. Why subject the company or myself to a relationship that isn't productive. I think they're probably happier, or at least the X-Men department is far happier without me there. God knows I'm far happier not to be there. So I suppose in a very real sense this worked out for the best. Also in my secret heart of hearts I like to think it's their major loss. But, hey, sometimes you need to be shoved out of the airplane without a parachute to find you really can fly.

Sovereign Seven ™ & © 1994 Chris Claremont

☆OFFICIAL☆ PRESS RELEASE

Skybox

Reprinted below is an official press release exactly as it was mailed to Vantage. Since press releases come straight from comic publishers, they can be the most accurate, most up-to-date source of news possible. They can also be biased.

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SKYBOX RELEASES PLANS FOR ULTRAVERSE MASTER SERIES

ST. LOUIS - Only twice in its history has SkyBox commissioned one artist to provide all of the original artwork for a series of trading cards. The results speak for themselves, as Jim Lee's X-MEN Trading Cards and Joe Jusko's Marvel Masterpieces from 1992 both rank among the most successful comic card lines to ever hit the market.

SkyBox announced today that it has commissioned one of the best-known painters in the industry, Dave Dorman, to provide 100 percent of the artwork for an extraordinary new card series, SkyBox Master Series Ultraverse Edition. Dorman, who won the 1993 Eisner Award as the Best Comics Painter, is creating 90 all new, original paintings of the top characters from the Ultraverse for this card line. SkyBox revealed prototype cards from the series at the Capital City trade show today in St. Louis, MO.

The SkyBox Master Series brand is the most premium card product on the market, featuring the finest artwork available and full UV-coating and foil-stamping on every card. Similar in quality to the award-winning Marvel Masterpieces and Star Trek Master Series products released by SkyBox in 1992 and 1993, the Ultraverse Edition will feature Dorman's unique interpretations of the characters from the hottest new comics universe of 1993--the Ultraverse from Malibu Comics.

The August-releasing card series will include 90 regular cards featuring all the heroes and villains from the Ultraverse, as well as several ground-breaking moments in the popular Ultraverse story line. Seven dazzling, randomly packed bonus cards will provide exclusive "Future Flash" information on several of the key characters. Five will be Ultra Cards, utilizing foil etching to enhance Dorman's paintings of a future moment in the Ultraverse, and two will be unique holithograms, combining the depth of model-imaging holograms with Dorman's stunning artwork.

In addition, SkyBox will be randomly inserting 2,000 Dorman autograph cards and 75 Original Art Exchange Cards in a limited number of six-card packs. Each of these special Exchange Cards--one for each of 75 cards in the series--may be redeemed for Dorman's original painting created for the card.

SkyBox will be giving away exclusive, show-specific prototypes from the card line at each of the major comic shows this summer, including the Capital Cities, Heroes World, and Diamond retailer shows and the Heroes Convention, Chicago Comic Con, and the San Diego Comic-Con. SkyBox will also hold a drawing at each show to give away one of Dorman's original paintings created for the card line, and Dorman will be appearing at the SkyBox booth for autographs and to talk to fans. Each of the major distributors will be giving away one of Dorman's original paintings created for this series through a random drawing from retailers ordering the product.

The SkyBox Master Series Ultraverse Edition card line follows the successful Ultraverse II Origins card line released in February. SkyBox produces Ultraverse trading cards under an exclusive license with Malibu Comics.

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VANTAGE

Speaking of Ultraverse

Speaking of the Ultraverse, you may have noticed there's no big Ultraverse crossover this summer. That's because the powers that be at Malibu realize that the summer has become over-commercialized. Once a time for easy sales, each summer now seems overrun by a hodge-podge of huge publisher marketing campaigns that seem to do no more than devour each other out.

Malibu, however, IS still alive and kicking. Plans for September include a crossover called Hostile Takeover. Len Strazewski, who has an extensive business background, will orchestrate this event which will involve some of the Ultraverse's lesser-known books. As for that inevitable Prime Earthers, Malibu sources say they are hoping for Fall of 1995.

Hold on to these Prime #2s . . . Prime has emerged as the central and most popular character of the Ultraverse, and you can bet your bottom dollar he'll someday appear on the tube!

THE VIEW FROM OBLIVION

By Corey Bond

The linguistic skills of your average comics fan are, by necessity, beyond that of mere mortals. You know this to be true.

A simple conversation between two fans takes a brief eternity to get through because of the time allotted to puns, insults, sarcastic comments, obscure quotes, and innumerable other tangents. The first person won't get halfway through a sentence before the other has derailed his train of thought with some cryptic witticism. And heaven forbid someone try to tell a story in a comic shop.

For example, just last week someone came into my store and asked if I had seen the newest version of Sim City.

"A Dame to Kill For?" I asked. "Of course. I'm a big Frank Miller fan. What about it?"

"No," he replied. "Not Sin City. Sim City. With an 'm'."

"Sim City? What, is it inhabited by aardvarks?"

"Huh?"

Obviously, all that this unfortunate individual wanted to do was tell me about his new computer game. But the persistence necessary to accomplish such a feat is of a much higher level within the confines of a comic shop than without.

Why? Because comics fans are trained in the deadly art of witty banter. And like a Green Beret suffering from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, they can't always turn this skill off when it's not called for.

Who taught them this skill? Their friendly neighborhood Spider-Man. And the training regimen probably began around age seven.

Spider-Man is Lord of Linguistics. He can leap from a skyscraper, begin reciting a speech about evil to the super-villain of the month, and finish it before hitting the ground, never once pausing to catch his breath or grunt after rebounding off a brick wall. And he always has snappy comebacks.

When none of them responded, I calmly backed away and returned to the relative safety of my desk.

Many comic fans have also memorized the dialogue to every Monty Python skit and movie, and that doesn't hurt either. It can sometimes be used to weed out the unworthy.

Once a group of BattleTech players were in the store describing to one another a particularly gruesome fray where one of the robot Mechs had both of its arms and legs blown off. "Just a flesh wound," I interjected, reminded of the Black Knight from The Holy Grail. When none of them responded, I calmly backed away and returned to the relative safety of my desk.

And while we are discussing the unworthy, I must warn you not to confuse real comics fans with the Beavis and Butthead wannabes among you who respond to everything with "Huh-huh-huh. That was cool." They have nothing to contribute to your conversation and most of them will wander off if ignored.

Furthermore, I would advise you to attempt to restrain yourselves when conversing with "civilians" (non-comic fans) who can neither keep pace with your digression nor understand your arcane references. But I'm sure this falls on deaf ears.

Most of us wear our "weirdness" as a

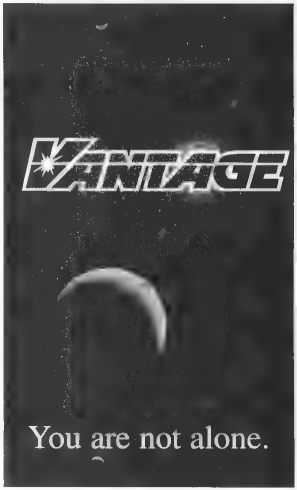
badge of pride. Besides, the experience of interacting with fellow initiates can be so much richer.

I got to use one of my favorite lines on Peter David, writer of **The Incredible Hulk** and stuff. Standing outside the Hard Rock Cafe in Atlanta, I noticed Peter and his wife Myra approaching, and commented to Myra, who had earlier been searching for Peter, "I see you found your husband." Peter, a true comics fan, replied, "No, just an exact duplicate."

This left me open to respond, "Ah yes, there was that transporter accident eight years ago," referring to the Star Trek episode in which Riker discovers that there are two of him. This launched Peter and me into a discussion about Riker, the classic Trek episode, "The Enemy Within," and his novel **Imzadi**. Had I used that line on "civilians," I would have been greeted with nothing more than blank stares.

I suppose if there's a lesson to be found in this month's column, it's "Hang with your own kind."

(Corey Bond, writer of other stuff, plied on to the giant heap of ever-increasing stuff that we all feel compelled to wade through, runs a comic shop that civilians rarely escape alive.)



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☆OFFICIAL☆ PRESS RELEASE

Full Moon

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FULL MOON ENTERTAINMENT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

FULL MOON ENTERTAINMENT ANNOUNCES LAUNCH OF COMIC BOOK DIVISION AT WONDERCON

Los Angeles --- Full Moon Comics, the new independent comic book division of Full Moon Entertainment, will be officially introduced to the general media market at this year's WonderCon 8 Convention of Comic Book Arts in Oakland, Calif., from April 22-24.

WonderCon is the first major comic book convention of 1994 and launches the official national convention season featuring top comic book artists, writers, publishers and vendors.

"We are looking forward to WonderCon as the first of many opportunities to begin alerting fans, retailers and the comic industry about our presence in the market," said Deni Loubert, publisher of Full Moon Comics. "We are setting the stage for our initial publication of two monthly titles and one summer mini-series appearing in the late spring of 1995."

At WonderCon, Full Moon Comics will be running trailers of several upcoming Full Moon Entertainment films as well as distributing posters from two Full Moon Entertainment films, "Arcade" and "Puppetmaster 4."

Full Moon Entertainment is an independent production/distribution company of direct-to-video films in the science fiction, fantasy and horror genres featuring concepts developed by Full Moon Entertainment Chairmar and Chief Executive Officer Charles Band. Since its founding in 1988, Full Moon has produced forty films including the popular "Subspecies," "Trancers," and "Puppet Master" series.

Besides the comic book division, Full Moon Entertainment includes three video labels: Full Moon (fantasy, horror and science fiction R-rated films); Moonbeam (specifically designed for family entertainment); and Torchlight (romantic, R-rated fantasy). In addition, Full Moon has its own in-house label, Moonstone Records, that markets and releases film soundtracks and non-soundtracks on CDs and cassettes, including Quiet Riot's "Terrified" and the Rhino Bucket's "Three."

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VANTAGE Voicebox

Keep An Eye On This One

This is not just another independent, Full Moon Entertainment is a for-real producer of cult films that develop huge video store followings- Full Moon sources say that they DO NOT plan to turn their films into comics. Rather, they will float out story ideas to the public as comics. Those comics that do well will be made into films. Of course, comics that are later made into films could have a bright future in the market.

All of this, plus the fact that Full Moon has the money to make a credible entrance into the world of comic publishing, makes Full Moon one to watch. No titles are planned yet. We'll keep you posted.

VANTAGE VIEWPOINTS

10238 West National Ave, #166, West Allis, WI 53227

Dear Vantage Viewpoints,

I have been collecting comics for a year now, and I will have to admit, it is very hard to pick a hot new comic. When ordering from Previews it is difficult, even though they have those Gems of the Month.

After reading through your 'zine, I find myself most enlightened. Keep up the excellent work.

Matthew Wagley
Garden City, KS

Matthew, the editorial staff at ***Previews*** *will be the first to tell you that Gems are not intended as future market picks. The books that* ***Previews*** *picks as Gems of the Month are those that the staff of* ***Previews*** *is most excited about from a sales and reading perspective. Typically, a comic will be made a Gem if the staff at* ***Previews*** *feels that the comic will sell well when it comes out and that people will really enjoy reading it.* ***Previews*** *is careful to pick books on this basis because they know so many fans and stores rely on them for advance-ordering. —VV*

Dear Viewpoints,

Your magazine has to be the find of my life. I have been reading **Vantage** since issue #7 and have seen your predictions succeed in the market.

One problem — why do you put some of your major picks on the front cover? Examples: **Green Lantern**, **Valor**, **Shi**, **Madman**, etc. Anyone looking through the shelves can see them. Your predictions are too valuable to show on the front cover. Your magazine was made for serious collectors and dealers.

Thanks for finally doing something about that rainbow seal — it was really annoying trying to get it open without the perforations.

You might like what I enclosed. I sure did, having been told about it months earlier.

Gabriel Feldblum
Flushing, NY

Ahhh, the rainbow seal thing! We knew we'd be hearing about that one. See, when we ordered a billion or so of those things for the first issue we thought they'd be rippable, like the gold ones we used to use for the old format. But when they arrived and we had all of the copies of VPRR #1 foiled, Publisher Rob Golub proudly sat down to open a first issue and...

Uhhh, lets just say it took awhile to get the thing open and he was, well, not thrilled. So, we got on the horn, ever fearful of Rob's wrath (he's a mutant, you know), and ordered a zillion PERFO-RATED rainbow foil seals.

Now the books are much easier to open — the best way is to just stick your finger in the center of the pages and rip right through it. It also helps to scream, "YAAAAAA" at the top of your lungs while you do it.

As for the cover, trying to come up with ways to let people know how valuable our info is, while not telling too much, has turned out to be a pretty hard thing to do. We're doing our best, though. What do you think of the cover this issue? Notice how we made the issue number on the comic unreadable — we're so dastardly.

Gabriel enclosed a clipping from Mile High Futures, one of the biggest back-issue catalogs out there. The clipping offers Valor #12 for six dollars and Valor #18 for five. Hmmmm . . . has someone at Mile High been reading Vantage? —VV

Dear Vantage Viewpoints,

I sell at shows in New York and I've found **Vantage** to be a truly useful magazine. I like getting a second opinion. Even if I don't always agree (but I often do), I find it useful. Also, you are obviously months ahead of other magazines on many news items.

Anyway, I just wanted to thank you for a job well done. One comment before I close — thanks for perforating the foil seals.

Sam Parker
Great Neck, New York

D'oh! (As Homer Simpson would say it) —VV

HEY! EVERYONE WHO GETS A LETTER PRINTED IN UPCOMING ISSUE #6 GETS A FREE COPY OF VPRR #1 SIGNED BY PUBLISHER ROB GOLUB AND SHI ARTIST BILL TUCCI! WILD!

We can't write back, but we read everything and we'll print what you have to say, space permitting! Write to:

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10238 West National Ave, #166
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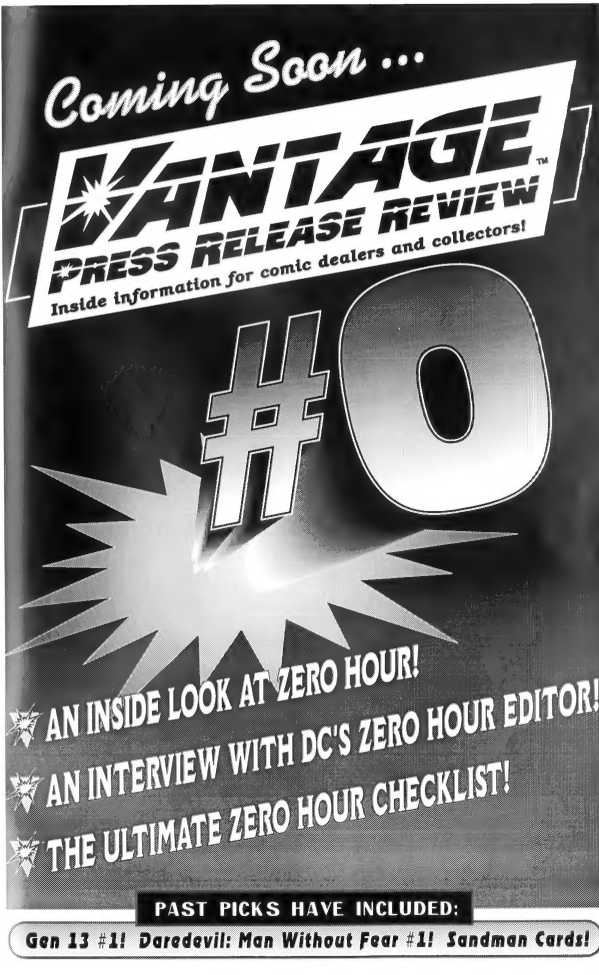
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TIMELINE

...Somewhere between Zero Hour™ and the Chaos Effect™...

1st We say: "It's gonna happen!"

2nd It happens!

3rd Other mags say: "It happened! And we noticed! Are we cutting edge or what?"

... reading about the past and start reading about the future! Vantage contains the only serious future pick list!

"Vantage Pick"

–Vantage on Gen 13 #1 before it came out!